

## **GINNI: A SHORT STORY ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE – AN ANALYSIS**

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### **Abstract**

According to Tagore, in the critical period of growth and development, the child's life is subjected to the education factory, lifeless, colourless, and dissociated from the context of the universe. The modern concept of classroom management is broader and stems out to be an extension of Tagorean concept. It includes all the pro-active measures the teacher must do to foster student involvement and cooperation in the classroom activities and to establish a productive teaching-learning and working environment. Management skills are crucial and fundamental, and a teacher who is grossly inadequate in such management skills will not be able to accomplish much. Conferring of developmental tasks to prove competency and reading of students' mental health are utmost vital in any inclusive classroom. It creates inspiration and thus, a great responsibility is vested with the teacher-education institutions to make the budding teachers good class managers too.

**Keywords:** Classroom management, Rabindranath Tagore, social constructivism, naturalist

### **Introduction**

Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) a great poet, short story writer, playwright, novelist and proficient psychologist has been regarded as one of the greatest of modern Indian writers as he precisely interwove different human emotions and societal conditions. The great playwright opined that the schools in our country are far from being integrated to society, the system seems to impose from the outside. The courses they teach are dull and dry, painful to learn, and useless when learnt. There is nothing in common between the lessons the pupils cram up from ten to four o'clock and the country where they live ... It is clear, therefore, that although we might succeed in copying to perfection the externals of the European school ... we shall only be burdening ourselves with tables and benches, rules and curricula ... We must put the European model entirely out of our minds, if only for the reason that the European history and European society are different from our history and our society.

### **Tagorean Philosophy of School**

According to Tagore, in the critical period of growth and development, the child's life is subjected to the education factory, lifeless, colourless, and dissociated from the context of the universe. They are born to take delight in the world, but such delightful activity is fettered and imprisoned, muted by a

force called discipline. This discipline invariably kills the treasured sensitiveness of the child's mind which is always on the alert, restless and eager to receive first-hand knowledge from Mother Nature. He opined that the learners sit inert, like dead specimens of some museum, while lessons are pelted on them from a height, like hail stones on flowers.

In the ancient India the school was where life itself was. There the learners were brought up, not in the academic ambience only, but in the atmosphere of living aspiration and grew in their spirit with their teachers' own spiritual growth .... They led a simple life and learned the daily chores of life.

In childhood we learn our lessons with the aid of both body and mind, with all the senses active, vibrant and eager. When we are sent to school, the doors of natural information are closed to us; our eyes see the letters, our ears hears the abstract lessons, but our mind misses the perpetual stream of ideas from nature, because the teachers, in their wisdom, think these bring distraction, and have no purpose behind them. Nature, the greatest or all teachers, is thwarted at every step by the human teacher who believes in machine-made lessons rather than life lessons, so the growth of the child's mind is not only injured, but forcibly spoiled.

### Story Background

A careful reading of the story reveals that, apart from the known attributes of Rabindranath Tagore, he was also a defiant educational psychologist. In this writing he has drawn a co-relation between psychology and education, and has brought about two important aspects i.e. the role of the teacher and the process of class management.

Shivnath Pandit, is the teacher-in-charge for the Primary Section of the school. He had a typical look with bald head, clean shaven and a tiki adorning like a crown. He used to create a constant mental agony among the pupils, and the torture was such that the teacher was compared to a stinging bee. The author cited that in the animal kingdom most of the creatures possess only a single offensive mechanism to protect themselves from danger but this teacher who is the sole authority of the class possessed several traits of exercising fear and verbal insult to torment his students. He often rechristened the specific students which made them really humiliated. Indeed this was a punishment which had a tremendous bearing on their tender minds. Ashu was a little boy of introvert nature and he shied away from real world maturity. He felt uncomfortable when his *everyday lunch* was sent from home with a grand manifestation. He felt embarrassed himself at the majestic nurturance of his family. He never felt that his *identity* was needed to be highlighted. He was a diligent student and had no such striking shortcomings. Ashu would often arrive late for class and therefore Shivrambabu was annoyed at his frequent late arrivals and therefore, he was often on his knees knelt down outside the class. At those dire moments, Ashu often prayed for the earth to diverge away so that he could disappear inside. After a specific occasion, Shivrambabu named him Ginni (The Housewife/Homemaker) and made him humiliated in front of his classmates. Naturally it holds a significant circumstantial story. On a particular rainy day, Ashu was absent for school. He and his sister were playing with dolls adorned for marriage. But the heavy shower spoiled much of their play-preparations and above all, the priest did not arrive to solemnize the doll-marriage. So in that heavy shower, Ashu with great concern and being a part of the doll-play hurriedly approached Shivrambabu mistakenly, to confer the marriage. But that seemed a great blunder committed by him for this specific utterance to Shivrambabu which left him with awe. Ashu hastily took refuge under his bed for the rest of the day. It seemed that playing such games of household chores like "*rannabati*" (cooking) by accompanying his little sister seemed to be great insult and shattering to his boyhood identity. Eventually for this case, Shivrambabu who called him 'Ginni', gave him a

blow in which his gender identity was at stake. It seemed that this remark apparently led to the transformation of his gender and that too harshly offended his personality. The teacher turns out to be opportunistic to exhibit his weakness and simultaneously intended to make him disciplined and keep him traumatized in the classroom. In fact this was the eventual motto of the teacher to control his classroom.

### **ANALYTICAL REVIEW: TEACHER AND CLASSROOM**

The classroom management in this case has been performed simply with terror and a shrewd weapon of personal insult. Usually this sort of practice is still in vogue. Often teachers resort to such practices, coax the class and compel the learners to remain in utter silence. With the weapon of fear psychosis they regulate/discipline the class. This psychosis is simply a form of mental disturbance which is so severe, make the person incapable of adjusting in his particular social environment. In later life, they themselves undergo extreme mental disorders and affect their nearest neighbours. This sort of regulatory-mechanism resorted by the teacher, is obviously damaging for managing the class of children (6-8 years of age group). Here, the teacher is well-aware of the individual differences of the students but he uses them very cynically. Classroom management is probably the single biggest issue that can be the demise of any teacher no matter what their intentions may be. If a teacher is unable to control his/her students, he will not be able to teach them effectively or will never incorporate simple procedures and expectations and would constantly threaten them with his power. This extra-punitive aggressive trait dominates in the person, who to gain something hurts and attacks others. It is simply a matter of projection of dissatisfaction, stress, frustration and pent-up feelings let out from the concerned person through his behavioural procedures whilst managing his class. He is even cautious to use the crowd-psychology irritate and agonize the child's mental set-up. The usage of the negative-reinforcers by the teacher creates negative feeling and adverse attitude towards teachers from the very childhood days. The teacher can become disastrous for the mental growth and development of a child. The entire processes of assimilation and accommodation through cognitive development, according to J. Piaget's schema concept, get ruined and the person becomes mal-adjusted in the society. According to Erikson, the said age is in transition between *Initiative versus Guilt* and *Industry versus Inferiority*. In the story, the teacher wants the child to feel the guilt of playing with his little sister and simultaneously develop an inferiority complex in him, and also to suppress the psycho-social development of the child. Contrary to this, both Freud and Erikson have stressed the importance of social environment in the childhood days for the fullest development of the personality.

Rabindranath Tagore believed in a healthy relationship between the teacher and the taught. He emphasized that the teacher should not be a dictator or disciplinarian in the class. He was against any sort of punishment or mental suffering to a student or use of inappropriate language in the classroom or have poor judgment of the learners. There are some teachers who simply lack motivation. There is no creativity or simple innovativeness in their teaching. He commented that those teachers who pride themselves on being disciplinarians are really born tyrants, and they give outlet to their inherent lust for their tyranny, make use of these helpless children and impose on them own rigid code of behaviour and in an autocratic atmosphere, the classroom is bound to be stuffy and inert. Students will be unable to interact with each other and there would no social development. Unfortunately, herein, the teacher is unable to master the subject or the content knowledge well enough to teach it. This is an area that could be evaded through lesson-preparation, otherwise, the teacher would lose credibility or efficient interaction with the students. Moreover they lack professionalism which encompasses many different areas of teaching. He opined that education in a "miniature society" modifies and regulates the behavioural changes in a child.

Rabindranath also stressed the aspects which a teacher should be apprised of to become a successful disseminator of knowledge. He affirmed that the teacher must have the knowledge of fundamental principles of human behaviour to tackle the problems of his students, and should possess a fine mental health to support and equip them. Moreover, he should be acquainted with self-introspection and self-evaluation. He must be emotionally stable, possess a positive outlook, develop a noble philosophy of life among his students so that they get inspiration and motivation in their life and be able to cultivate self-confidence. Besides this, the school atmosphere should be like an open house wherein the teachers and the students belong to a single unit sharing a common aspiration for the delights of culture. He expressed the importance of reflective thought process and stressed to develop the self-regulatory practices that foster mental well-being and enhance specific capacities of these little children. Ultimately this may lead to increased self-actualisation, emotional maturity and a sense of eudemonic basis of happiness in them.

Children should be surrounded with the things of nature which have their own educational value. Their minds should be allowed to stumble upon and be surprised at everything that happens in today's life ... We insist upon forced mental feeding and our lessons become a form of torture. This is one of man's most cruel and wasteful mistakes. Resolving on such decisions, perhaps, Rabindranath a great naturalist, established the school in Shantiniketan and kept a vigilant eye on the following issues:

- Every individual should be given freedom to his natural endowment and his own way
- Recognition of individual differences and potentialities
- Students and teachers to live together so as to foster the belief of belongingness to a single unit

### **MODERN PRIORITIES**

The modern concept of classroom management is broader and stems out to be an extension of Tagorean concept. It includes all the pro-active measures the teacher must do to foster student involvement and cooperation in the classroom activities and to establish a productive teaching-learning and working environment. Management skills are crucial and fundamental, and a teacher who is grossly inadequate in such management skills will not be able to accomplish much. Careful tailoring of the classroom activities through students' behavioural modifications, and shaping and steering the classroom curricula need to be the ardent priorities. The teacher should be diligent enough to tackle the students and upgrade their skills. Students should learn to behave properly and act effectively in an environment that meets their basic personal and psychological needs. All students learn the best in a school set up in which they feel comfortable, safe and accepted. There should be mutual respect between both teachers and students. It may be said that in 'higher-achieving schools' teachers spend more time in actual teaching and in academic interactions with the students than the teachers do in 'lower-achieving schools'.

Social constructivism for classroom management can be ushered by an educator through induction of the following criteria:

1. Ensuring success for all types of learners - As every student possess unique learning styles, using the same strategies and activities for everyone may not be successful. Instead, incorporation of differentiated instruction strategies and techniques that are well suited to various types of intelligence, motivation to learn and demonstrate knowledge in their own way will thrive, and this will result in a better-managed classroom.

2. Reinforcing rules and values - At a very tender age of children, students appreciate flexible rules and specific routines which are visible to everyone and they can conduct themselves accordingly in their classes.

3. Rethinking the classroom-design - For a better lesson transaction, classroom arrangements and adjustments based on individual students' needs is indispensable. Communication allows students to work ahead confidently and deliver short presentations to share take-away points. Promotion of learning-transaction by group alertness is a necessity and that ensures the prevention of behaviour disorders. Application of QAIT (Quality, Appropriate level, Incentive and Time) model of Robert Slavin is a revision of John Carroll's model of school learning for studying the dimensions of classroom effectiveness is valuable.

4. Freedom of expression and motivation - To ensure model students with self-esteem, the person need to be a model teacher-reflection on the part of the teacher is necessary. He needs to be a leader and a facilitator rather than a dictator whom students fear. At this young age, students are active participants, vibrant and desperately want to be heard and have their opinions which demand to be valued. Effective teaching enables these students cultivate a variety of interests and attitudes and develop mental-mapping to act in different situations.

In India, Rabindranath Tagore created a form of authentic education which he believed was more true to the needs of children growing up in India than conventional, didactic schooling: children's minds are sensitive to the influences of the world. Their subconscious minds are active, always imbibing some lesson, and realizing the joy of knowing. This sensitive receptivity allows them, without any strain, to master language, which is the most complex and difficult instrument of expression, full of indefinable ideas and abstract symbols ... Because of this, their introduction to the world of reality is easy and joyful.

### **Concluding Remarks**

It is established that student aggressiveness in the class can be treated by a 'good class teacher', but what about aggressive traits in the teacher himself? A person who does not possess the skills and competencies required for the tasks expected of the teacher, cannot be called a 'teacher'. The requisite knowledge of pedagogy and the mastery of the transaction and dissemination skill need to be nurtured by an individual aspiring for a teaching profession. To inculcate the sense of duty and responsibility, proper awareness is indispensable for the tender learners. Conferring of developmental tasks to prove competency and reading of students' mental health are utmost vital in any inclusive classroom. It creates inspiration and thus, a great responsibility is vested with the teacher-education institutions to make the budding teachers good class managers too.

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